

FAQ

PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS FOR

MSN Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner (AGPCNP), Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner (AGACNP), Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP), and Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) Specializations



A key element of Walden's Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program is the practicum. To help you gain a clear understanding of what is required, we've compiled the answers to some frequently asked student questions.

What is a practicum?

A practicum is a graduate-level course that allows you to apply in real life what you've learned in your coursework. For the AGPCNP, AGACNP, FNP, and PMHNP specializations, this is referred to as a clinical practicum, or clinical. A clinical is a supervised, on-site experience in which you develop applied skills and integrate professional knowledge in the provision of hands-on care.

What is a preceptor?

Preceptors are qualified nurse practitioners within a clinical field site who are responsible for guiding students' practicum experiences. For the nurse practitioner specializations, physicians may also serve as preceptors, but must be credentialed and licensed to practice in their population-focused and/or specialty area of practice. Preceptors are master's- or doctorate-prepared and licensed and credentialed in their state to practice in their area of specialization.

What are the site requirements?

Clinical field sites enter into an affiliation agreement with Walden, stating they will provide appropriate support and supervision for students during the practicum experience. You initiate the field site affiliation agreement during your Walden application process, usually with the help of preceptors or other personnel at the clinical field sites.

Will Walden help me find a clinical site?

Although Walden does not place students into clinical sites, our team of field education coordinators will provide you with suggestions at your request. You may

complete the practicum where you work; however, it must be:

- In a different setting than your usual assigned work.
- Completed outside of your normal working hours.
- Performed under the direction of a direct on-site supervisor who is not your immediate supervisor.

What does the application process involve?*

You must choose a clinical field site and initiate contact with a potential preceptor who meets the qualifications and is interested in working with you. Please keep in mind that you are taking four courses that focus on different populations, and you may need three to four different preceptors and sites over the course of your program. You should have your first preceptor nominee and a practicum field site identified by the middle of your second term. Clinical application materials must be submitted at least 13 weeks prior to starting your first clinical course.

When can I begin my clinical practicum?

You will be registered for your practicum course once your practicum application is approved. You may start your practicum once you have:

- Successfully completed all prerequisite coursework.
- Submitted your practicum application documents.
- Received notification of approval of your application and preceptor nominee.

You must also be in good academic standing to begin the practicum experience.

How long is my practicum?

You must complete four sequential, 11-week courses that include both didactic and practicum requirements and complete a minimum of 640 hours of supervised practicum experience (160 hours per course).

Can I take two practicum courses concurrently?

No, we recommend completing one course at a time due to the number of clinical hours that would need to be completed during one 11-week quarter.

Do I have to finish all the practicum hours during the practicum course?

Yes, but the number of hours completed per week can be flexible, as long as the 160 hours are satisfied by the end of the course. You will not be able to progress to the next course if all hours are not completed.

Can I get credit for practicum activities completed before I start the practicum course?

No, you must wait until the first day of the practicum course to begin your practicum activities, and your practicum plan must be created and approved by your course instructor. Any hours accumulated prior to the first week of the practicum course will not be accepted.

Can I use the same preceptor and site for each of my four practicum courses?

No, the practicum requirements and ages and types of patients vary in each course, so one site and preceptor will not provide the breadth and depth of clinical experiences required.

Do I need to purchase liability insurance?

Yes, all Walden students beginning a practicum are required to purchase professional liability insurance, even if there is no patient-client contact. The policy must be for at least \$1 million per incident, \$3 million aggregate. Walden can provide suggestions on where to purchase this insurance.

Will I have to complete any other requirements to be approved for practicum?

Students must complete specific requirements prior to being approved for practicum. These onboarding requirements vary from state to state; however, they generally include a background check and drug screening, health requirements, required training, professional liability insurance, and any additional requirements from the field site. Students complete requirements through Walden's designated provider, CastleBranch. Students are responsible for all costs related to purchasing a screening package through CastleBranch and completing the requirements.

More details about the practicum experience will be provided once you enroll. If you have additional questions not addressed in this document, please contact your enrollment advisor:

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